

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

BY THE

RETIRING PRESIDENT,

FORDYCE BARKER, M.D., LL.D. (COLUMB. ET EDINB.)

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FELLOWS OF THE ACADEMY:

IN now closing my official relations with the Academy, it is both a pleasure and a duty to briefly recall the more prominent features in its history during the period of this connection. I will also venture to offer a few suggestions derived from my long experience in this position, as to some points relating to its future growth, its increasing usefulness, and its influence on the profession. As I know you will be impatient for the intellectual feast which is to follow in the address of my successor to this Chair, I shall be as brief as is consistent with a clear statement of the points to which I think it desirable to ask your attention.

It has been my good fortune to hold this position when the profession were becoming more alive to the importance of this Institution, and more and more ready to contribute material aid for its growth and support. At the same time, there was a new development of mental activity in the profession, not only in this City, but all over the world, demonstrated by great and important discoveries in science, and a wonderful increase and valuable additions to medical literature.

As I have referred to these facts more in detail in former addresses before the Academy, I will not detain you now by further allusion to them. I will only briefly refer to a few of the most notable events connected with the Academy, during my administration.

First to be mentioned is this new and commodious Hall, which could not then have been built except for the munificent donation of one noble benefactor, Dr. Abram DuBois, and the contribution to the full extent of their hard-earned means by

many others. We are rapidly out-growing our new Hall, and must soon have another, as our library is now nearly filled. As I learn from Mr. Brown, our excellent assistant librarian, the Academy had, when this Hall was built 1879, about 9,000 volumes; it now has about 25,000 volumes and 15,000 pamphlets. Its circulating department has about 6,000 volumes, which our Fellows can take out of the library for consultation at home. In our Journal room, open as is the library for all who may wish to read in our rooms, there are 225 medical journals in all languages in which there is to be found a medical literature.

The Academy is greatly indebted to Messrs. Wm. Wood & Co., and D. Appleton & Co., for large donations of their new publications, and I believe to some foreign and other American medical publishers. We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of these gifts, and we feel assured that they were made from entirely generous motives. But we may be permitted to express the conviction that both publishers and authors will find it a wise business policy to place a copy of every new medical work in our library, as it has been estimated by a competent authority that one copy of every new good book in this library will secure the sale of at least ten more. The library is visited not only by the profession of this city, but by medical men from all parts of the country, who come to this great metropolis. They have seen in some medical journal a notice of a book, but have not remembered who were the publishers; in coming to our library, they examine it to see if it is what they want.

The next notable event in the history of our Academy, since I have held this position, is its absorption of another very important organization, the Journal Association, which, to quote from a former address, "not only added largely to our library, but also to our moral and intellectual power."

The truth of history demands that the fact should be mentioned that, nearly two years ago, the Academy passed through the segment of a cyclone; but, like a good steamship driven over a sandbank near a lee shore, with its engines temporarily

disabled, it escaped being hogged, its seams were not opened, its barnacles have been scraped off, its bottom has been cleaned, and it has since gone on its voyage with favoring winds and fine weather. All who are familiar with its past history, and who are unbiased by personal feeling or prejudice, must agree that the Academy has more nearly approached its avowed aims and its high purposes during the past year than in any former one since it was founded. It has had a larger increase of prominent men, and of young men of promise, than in any previous year since that in which it was organized, with the exception of the year when the Journal Association came into it. More than four times as many papers have been offered to me than there have been sessions to listen to them, and as these sessions had been promised to previous applicants, months before, very many of these papers have been withdrawn. I have afterwards seen them, not only in the medical journals of this city, but others in the journals of Philadelphia and Boston. It is bare justice for me to add that I have generally found them to be of such merit that I greatly regretted that the Academy could not have had the credit of their first publication.

The papers which have been read at our meetings have been characterized by careful preparation, thorough research, original and often valuable hints as to pathological examinations and therapeutical indications.

Our discussions have been of such excellence that I am quite certain that every one carries away from our meetings either new suggestions or new information, which amply compensate for the evening passed in this Hall.

In a scientific body like this, all discussions should express the results of mature inquiry, and a clear and forcible statement of the reasons which have led to positive practice. In some papers, the novelty of opinions advocated and the original methods of practice proposed, whether medical or surgical, may be so exclusively a matter of individual experience that all discussion must be necessarily limited at first to inquiries and *à priori* objections, founded on anatomical, physiological,

or pathological grounds. Papers of this class should be the subject of a most thorough and searching examination; for they may be either mischievous, and their effect for evil must be effectually exposed, or they may possess positive value which should lead to prompt acceptance and adoption.

To secure such discussion as will represent the most advanced knowledge of the Academy on any special topic, I have at our recent meetings adopted a plan first introduced by Dr. V. P. Gibney. Writers of papers have been requested to send to a few of those whom they knew to have given special attention to their subjects, the points which they would suggest for discussion, printed on a small slip of paper, and especially asking those who held different or opposing views to take part in the discussion. They thus have time to arrange and formulate their knowledge and opinions, and the time of those present at the meeting is not wearily wasted in listening to crude, profitless, and digressive talk.

The reports of the Treasurers of the Academy and of the Board of Trustees have already been before the Academy. While its financial condition is now better than ever before, there still remains much to do. A few weeks since, a Committee of Ways and Means were appointed, of which Dr. Gouverneur M. Smith is the Chairman, to solicit contributions to pay off our only debt, a mortgage of five thousand dollars. They have worked with great zeal and enthusiasm, the Fellows of the Academy have responded with self-sacrificing generosity; the necessary sum has not yet been wholly secured, but the prospect of soon accomplishing this is most encouraging. We particularly need money for preserving our library by book-binding. It will be remembered that last year a generous sum was given for this purpose by a lady, who has in many instances shown that she is as warm a friend to the Academy, as she is conspicuous for her readiness to aid every good work by munificent support. Many of our Fellows have also most liberally added to the beauty of the Library in this way, and have rendered great service in the preservation of our books in good condition, which otherwise would speedily deteriorate.

I have long contemplated offering some suggestions on the present occasion as to the wisdom of a change in our By-laws relative to the duties and functions of the sections. Only one of the sections, that of Obstetrics and Diseases of Women, has kept up an active organization, done excellent work, and made regular reports to the Academy since my official connection with it. Two or three only of the other sections have reported their organization, by the election of a Chairman and Secretary; and this has been all. Two have appointed a Fellow to read an original paper before the Academy, one of which, a most valuable paper, was read before us. The other I have never been able to get, and as four years have now passed since that time, I do not think it very probable that it ever will come before the Academy.

The founders of the Academy did not contemplate making these sections independent societies for special work, but as contributing aids to the high aims of the central power. I had proposed to suggest such a modification of Article XVII., Section 2, as would assign to the sections functions similar to those of the Academy of Medicine of Paris. But we have not the time now to consider the details of such a change, and I leave the matter for future consideration by the Academy, and my honored successor.

Neither did the founders of the Academy intend to absorb or concentrate in itself all the scientific work of the profession in this city. The whole spirit of its high aims and purposes indicate that, on the contrary, they desired to stimulate and encourage such work in every feasible direction. I hope the time is not far distant when the Academy will be so well endowed that it may offer to all such societies, as the New York County Medical Society, the Pathological, the Obstetric and the Surgical Societies, and the youngest of all, which has begun its career with excellent scientific work, the New York County Medical Association, a home for its meetings free from all expense.

Our standing committees have always faithfully discharged their important duties, with one exception, and that is the

Committee on Medical Education, which has had little to do, and it has just done this and nothing more.

I may now be permitted to ask if the time has not come, when it should be one of the most important and useful of all of our standing committees, in carrying out one of the objects of the Academy as declared in our Constitution, "the elevation of the standard of medical education." How can this best be accomplished, is the question.

It seems to me that a way is now open for this Committee to do effective work in this direction.

For years the medical profession in all parts of the country have been agitating the question of separating the licensing power to practise medicine from the teaching power.

It is a subject of great importance to the profession, to our medical schools, and equally so to the community. It must be met and settled in a way that will be most effective for good, but this cannot be done at once. There are two ways by which this can be accomplished, but each would require time.

One way involves the division of the profession into contending parties, each most zealous to carry its point, heated controversies which always provoke personal feeling and personal antagonism, an appeal for action of societies, and a struggle for majority votes, not only in medical societies, but in securing legislative action; all of which would undoubtedly affect injuriously our medical colleges and lower the profession in the estimation of the public. Any good secured would be at a great and unnecessary cost. The public cannot understand medical controversies except from what appears on the surface. A "doctor's quarrel" seems to the non-medical community like a fight between drunken men in the dark. The late Mr. Charles Dickens once related to me a story which he had heard, of how Sidney Smith convulsed with laughter a dinner company at Holland House, by his description of a duel between two doctors. The mode of warfare was croton oil on the tips of their fingers, trying to rub each other's lips.

Now this question is one which belongs to the domain of reason, and let us hope, for the honor of the profession, that

hereafter it will be confined to the region of argument, and that in due time it will be settled to the satisfaction of all who are actuated by pure motives and a desire to secure the best results. At the last meeting of the Academy, some resolutions were offered, but by the courteous consent of my friends, the mover and seconder of the resolutions, they were laid on the table for future consideration. I therefore feel that I have now the floor and venture to throw out a few suggestions as to the other method of meeting this question.

In order that the standpoint from which I look at this subject may be perfectly understood, I will briefly state a few propositions which seem to me common ground upon which we all stand, and from which we must start.

Where charters for medical colleges can be easily obtained from State legislatures, it is a duty which the profession owes to the public as well as to itself, to protect the community from ignorant, unprincipled practitioners of medicine, who not only swindle their victims, but jeopardize health and often sacrifice human life.

This is a matter of great difficulty where each State is an independent sovereignty as to all such laws, where there is no central power to control action, and where personal freedom of opinion and conduct is zealously guarded as to everything which does not interfere with the right of others as regards health and property.

The interests of the medical profession are so closely allied with the medical colleges that what affects detrimentally the one must reciprocally injure the other.

The profession has a perfect right to supervise the methods and exercise a controlling influence over those who by law are permitted the privilege of giving a diploma which is effectually a license to practise medicine.

All wise legislation must be based on a thorough knowledge of all the conditions which demand special law; it cannot be evolved from the inner consciousness of any one who has only the spirit, the zeal, and the genius of reform, but must be derived from the accumulated wisdom and experience of the past.

Mere examinations by a special board who have had no previous training in this direction, no personal acquaintance with the mental characteristics, the habits of study, or the personal conduct of the candidate, would be as unsafe a test for admission to the profession as any objection that can be urged against the present system. Injustice would be done to some, while fliprant readiness in reply, which can be easily attained by a quick, bright mind by a few weeks of cramming, without either solid acquirement or sound judgment, would always secure success.

The experience of all countries has demonstrated the necessity of examinations by the teaching faculties, and the wisdom of their assent to a license to practice.

But in all other countries except this, there is an additional protection to the profession and the public by the concurrence of another power.

In the Edinburgh University and in some other medical institutions of Great Britain, this is vested in a special Board of Examiners. In France, this is under the direct control of the government. The Minister of Public Instruction has not only the power of granting or withholding the diploma, but, in addition, even in this so-called republican government, he has the power of retiring any professor whose teaching is not abreast with the times. In Germany also, while the methods vary in different universities, and in different constituent parts of the empire, it is yet under government control, which I believe is always exercised wisely.

Now I offer the suggestion that a committee of judicious, wise, and unprejudiced medical men, which would represent the best interests of the profession, the medical colleges, and the public, could frame a law, with the aid of competent legal advisers, which would combine the two methods, in accordance with the spirit of our republican institutions and the sentiments of our epoch, and thus save the profession from unfortunate and heated controversies, and from crude, hasty, and ever-changing legislation.

Would not the demands of the most progressive members of the profession be satisfied if the Regents of the University

were empowered by law to appoint the Committee on Education of the Academy of Medicine a supervisory Board of Examiners for the medical colleges of this city, whose duty should be to make an annual report, not only as to the examination for diplomas, but other details as to the instruction and education of the student. This committee should be enlarged to the number of the principal departments of instruction, and should serve without pay, for there can be no doubt that the best men in the profession who have the time would esteem it a high honor to serve on such a committee.

For the medical colleges in other parts of the State, there would be no difficulty in devising a method by which the Regents would appoint men for the board of supervisory examiners who would be most satisfactory to all.

None except those who are well acquainted with the facts can appreciate the immense advance which the medical colleges of this city have made within the past quarter of a century in teaching, and the increased facilities for acquiring a thorough education in all departments.

I have also great pleasure in referring to two other schools, the "Polyclinic" and the "Post-Graduate Medical School and Hospital," which have been doing great work for the more thorough medical education of those who have diplomas, and thus necessarily for the "elevation of the profession," within the past three years. I do not believe that one in fifty of the profession of this city have the least conception of what these schools are doing. If I expressed in moderate terms my estimation of the importance and value of their work to the profession of the country, I should be regarded by many as either carried away by my enthusiasm or prompted by personal considerations, so I will only say, Go and see for yourselves. Medical men who come to this city, and who always keep up their professional interest, should not fail to visit them and see what clinical teaching and clinical opportunities are found here, with all the equipments for their utilization, and they will be well repaid for the time given up for this purpose. This system of special clinical improvement originated in Germany, and nine

or ten years ago I seized an opportunity to visit the most prominent of the polyclinics in that country. Undoubtedly they have greatly advanced within this time; but I assert that then none that I visited were either in clinical advantages or clinical teaching on a level with our own at the present time.

I take the liberty of suggesting that it would be a wise and politic movement for the medical colleges of this city, the "New York Polyclinic," and the "New York Post-Graduate Medical School and Hospital," to take the initiative, and invite the Committee on Medical Education of the Academy of Medicine to visit these institutions, study their methods and their equipments, and report the result of their observations to the Academy at its annual meeting in January, 1886.

It must be obvious to all that this great improvement in medical education, far beyond the elementary teaching of former times, implies a corresponding elevation, not merely in the level of the average of the profession, but a still greater growth in the higher standards of medical science and literature.

Thus the inquiry is naturally suggested, What is the future of this Academy, what is to be expected from it, and how is it to be placed on the high plane where it should stand in reference to the profession, not only of this city and this country, but of the world? A wise forecast will early plan to secure a result which it desires to attain.

While our educational institutions are steadily improving their facilities for training the young men who are about to begin their career, and our Polyclinics and Post-Graduate Schools are more thoroughly preparing them for the higher grades of the profession, such an organization as our Academy of Medicine, in the great metropolis of the country, should be an ultimate centre at which all those who have been long enough at work to find out their individual vocation should have every opportunity to carefully study all the literature of past ages, and make original investigations in every possible field of medical science which can add to its importance. All short of this will be just so far a failure of the true mission of the Academy.

Thus far, which is only a beginning, the Academy has done its duty in bringing together most of the best men of the profession and making them acquainted with the special ability of each, in collecting a most creditable library for consultation, research, and circulation, and in stimulating and bringing out good literary scientific work.

What the Academy requires in the future is :

First. A large fire-proof building, with ample room for a library containing all the medical literature of past and coming times, and including :

Second. A large hall for its meetings, and others for smaller societies and committees.

Third. A large room for a museum, illustrating physiological and pathological anthropology, and which should include a craniological series, a pathological series, and a series of sections and dissections illustrating topographical human anatomy, and a comparative anatomy series.

Fourth. An anthropometric laboratory, provided with the best means of measuring human bodies, the faculties, and everything cognate to these subjects, and which should include a set of psychometrical instruments and everything pertaining to the series.

Fifth. A lecture hall, connecting with the laboratory and fully equipped with apparatus for lectures and demonstrations of all kinds.

Sixth. It should also have a thoroughly educated and trained pathologist, who should, by means of an adequate salary paid by the Academy, be able to superintend all the scientific work and report on the specimens furnished to him ; and also a first-class mechanic, skilled in brass and glass work ; and a good practical phonographer.

This is a broad scheme which will require a very large endowment, but it is my firm conviction that it only outlines the future of the Academy, even if it demands a million of dollars.

The liberality of New York is as boundless as its wealth, when convinced of the worthiness of its object. But large wealth is subjected to perpetual annoyance from solicitations,

and to criticism from those who have some pet end to promote, which they deem the most important above all others. This kind of discipline trains wealth to the exercise of discrimination and judgment, and besides it has its own convictions as to how its surplus can best be employed.

The position of the possessors or representatives of great wealth in this country is peculiar and anomalous, and the thinking men of this class, and there are many, perfectly comprehend this.

There is no reason to suppose that there will be any exception in this country to the general experience of the world in the past, which is, that those who have but little or no property will always greatly outnumber those of large wealth. The position of the owners of great wealth is at once peculiar and anomalous with us. Heretofore, property has protected itself through its representatives, by monopolizing or controlling the law-making and the law-administering power. With us the condition of affairs, if not actually reversed, has certainly been brought within the possibility, if not the calamity of absolute reversal; inasmuch as through universal suffrage, untrammeled by conditions of property, and absolutely (in theory at least) free elections, the control of all law-making bodies and the appointment of all law administrators, has come to be possible with those "who have not" rather than "to those who have."

Property or its representatives, and more especially the representatives of very large wealth, are therefore exposed to dangers in the future with us, through arbitrary or destructive legislation, which have not existed or do not now exist in any other country. The possessors of great wealth, in virtue of their superior education and knowledge of the use of methods, may be able to guard themselves in the future, as they have in the past, but this will turn on the fact whether they have a clear perception of the situation, and the sagacity to avail themselves of the two strictly legitimate methods for protection open to them for adoption.

The first of these is to bring to the masses, in whom all political power rests, a full realization of the fact, that nothing

so undermines the prosperity of a state, or so quickly impoverishes the people, through the arrest of industrial growth, as the impairment or the menace of impairment of the rights of property.

The second is the demonstration by the possessors of wealth, by liberal contributions to every object that can benefit humanity, relieve suffering, prolong and preserve human life, improve education, aid scientific investigation and promote a higher development of art, that they regard their wealth in a great degree as in the nature of a trust, to be used by them for the benefit of humanity and the elevation of the masses.

Happily we have abundant proof that this view has been adopted by many in this city.

The foundation of the Astor Library and the Cooper Institute are a corroboration of this statement as regards the past. The splendid gift to the College of Physicians and Surgeons by Mr. W. H. Vanderbilt, the munificent endowment of the New York Cancer Hospital by Mr. John Jacob Astor, and the generous and liberal contribution of Mr. Andrew Carnegie for a pathological laboratory in the Bellevue Hospital Medical College, are recent evidences of the correctness of my assertion.

Such noble examples are sure to be emulated by many others in the future.

The wonderful material growth and development of this country is unparalleled by anything in the history of the past, and they are certain to go on in even more rapid strides for years to come. Its educational and scientific institutions will be placed on a corresponding plane, as compared with other parts of the world, with its industrial, its financial, and its political relations.

There is another point worthy of remark. Men of wealth, in common with other men of intelligence, like those devoted to literature and science, have a desire to be remembered after death. They have a dread of having their names and the record of their lives pass into utter forgetfulness or oblivion. To avoid this, the resting places of the dead are everywhere crowded with cenotaphs and memorials, and in this country especially,

by the erection of some of the most expensive monuments and mausoleums of modern times. They crowd each other in some of our cemeteries to such a degree that they lose all their individuality by their multiplicity; and the names which they are intended to keep alive are forgotten in the comments and criticisms as to the comparative merits of the architect or stone-cutter who has erected them. The frequent question asked is, "How much did it cost?" and the only suggestion is that of vulgar wealth. "Yet all here," to quote from quaint old Sir Thomas Brown, "are but Babel vanities. Time sadly overcometh all things, while her sister Oblivion reclineth somniferous, making puzzles of titanic erections and turning old glories into dreams."

The only lasting monument a man can build for himself is the reputation he makes during life, and the memory of the benefits which he has, in some form or other, conferred on those who live after him.

" But the good deed through the ages,
Living in historic pages,
Ever gleams and grows immortal,
Unconsumed by moth or rust."

From all these considerations I feel justified in expressing the belief that the ideal of the future of the Academy which I have given, will at no remote period prove to be history. I hope to live to see it well begun, and I have the strong conviction that some now present will see it in full accomplishment. Some man of wealth, fully comprehending the importance of this Academy, not merely to the profession, but still more to the public, will esteem it a privilege to have his name prefixed to our new hall by furnishing the requisite sum to build it and perfectly equip and support it; others will contribute the necessary amount to give their names to each of the special museums that I have mentioned, and others will place their names on an alcove in the library.

I here crave indulgence for one remark, the only one personal to myself:

I trust this evening will end, on my part, all official connection with any medical societies. The remainder of my life, except the time necessary for bread-winning, will be devoted to putting on record the results of more than forty years of study, observation, and experience, with the hope that this may be of some value to the younger men of the profession, and to doing all in my power to urge forward that future of our Academy which I have anticipated.

I have but a few words to add before introducing my successor.

Some years ago, when elected to a similar honor in another society, I remarked : "Scientific societies seem to be governed in their selection of office-bearers by one of two principles. One is to confer honor on those who, by their contributions to literature and science, have won a right to it. The other is to select such as will most efficiently perform the duties which pertain to the office."

In the election of my successor, the Academy has most happily combined both of these principles. His literary and scientific work have won for him an enviable fame and high distinction equally in this country and in Europe. His ability as a presiding and executive officer has already been successfully tested by his former service as President of the New York County Medical Society, and of the Medical Society of the State of New York. Thus he begins his career with a prestige which is a promise of great success.

I now have the great pleasure of presenting to him the "loving cup," on which his name has already been engraved, and which is to be transmitted to his successors in turn. It is ornamented with the symbol of friendship and love, and on it is the sentiment engraved, "May peace and love be multiplied unto us."

Some years ago the phrase was very current in the political world, "let us have peace." It is as wise a sentiment for the medical as for the political world. I sincerely hope that my successor will never have to qualify this with the paradoxical appendix, "Let us have peace, even if we have to fight for it."

